

FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: April 14, 2017

Agenda Item: Continuation of Middle Madison Valley Trumpeter Swan Reintroduction

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Endorsement

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 Min

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Background: Reintroduction of captive-raised trumpeter swans into suitable nesting areas is a proven management tool in Montana and neighboring states. FWP's program for trumpeter swan restoration was covered in a Commission-approved 2011 EA that was in effect for five years and is now expired. FWP has been releasing trumpeter swans since 2012, and we propose to continue restoration efforts for another five years, 2017-2021. We would like Commission endorsement to initiate an EA process to assess impacts of releases of a small number of trumpeters in the middle Madison Valley to re-establish breeding in areas where extensive habitat restoration has been ongoing since 2005. Swans for release would be obtained from the Wyoming Wetland Society facility in Jackson, Wyoming, which is the same facility that has provided swans for release in the Flathead/Mission and Blackfoot Valleys of Montana. Primary funding for the program would be raised by partner contributions from conservation agencies and organizations, as well as private individuals/foundations.

Trumpeter Swans

- Historically nested in western Montana Valleys but were extirpated during European settlement. Trumpeter swans for reintroduction into Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming are made available through a cooperative program with the Pacific Flyway Council, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Wyoming Wetland Society.
- Wyoming Wetland Society trumpeters have been used for releases in the Green River watershed of Wyoming and the Flathead, Mission and Blackfoot Valleys of Montana. In all cases, wild nesting flocks have results after approximately five to seven consecutive years of releasing captive-raised swans. Releases in the Blackfoot began in 2005 and resulted in two wild nesting pairs in 2011 and seven pairs successfully fledged broods in 2016.
- The middle Madison Valley between Ennis and Quake Lakes has been the site of significant habitat restoration for almost 15 years with funding from FWP, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, North Western Energy, and others. Collectively, these efforts have restored and enhanced over 1,000 acres of wetlands that were drained in the early 1950s. Restoration of breeding trumpeters to this area is the goal of this proposal.
- Montana FWP is one of three state conservation agencies that are committed to implementing the Trumpeter Swan Implementation Plan developed by the Pacific Flyway Council. Its goal is the slow growth in the number of trumpeter swans breeding in SE Idaho, western MT, and NW Wyoming. The Madison flock's restoration would contribute to that overall goal.

Public Involvement Process & Results: A formal Environmental Assessment and public scoping would begin pending the Commission's approval to proceed with an EA. Pending a generally favorable review and decision notice followed by Commission adoption, FWP will request Commission approval to proceed with release of about five swans this summer.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP as a partner with Idaho and Wyoming is committed to restoring breeding trumpeters to appropriate habitats within their historic range.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission endorse FWP to proceed with an EA evaluating the continuation of trumpeter swan reintroductions in the Madison Valley as presented by FWP.